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FALLING-STAR.¹

BY GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL.

ONCE, a long time ago, two girls were lying outside the lodge at night. They were looking up at the sky; and one said to the other, "That star is pretty, I like that one." The other answered, "I like that other one better." One of them pointed to a very bright star, and said, "I like that one best of all; I would marry that star."

That night as they lay down in the lodge, going to bed, they said, "To-morrow we will go out and gather wood." Next day they went out together for wood; and as they were going along in the timber, they saw a porcupine in a tree; and the girl who had chosen the bright star said, "I will climb up and pull him down." She climbed up into the tree toward the porcupine, but could not quite reach him. Just as she would stretch out her hand to seize his foot, he would move up a little, so that she could not reach him. Meantime the tree seemed to be growing taller. The girl below called to her friend, "You had better come down, this tree is growing taller!" — "No," said the other, "I can almost reach him now;" and she kept on climbing. When the girl below saw the tree growing so high, and the other girl so far above her that she could hardly see her, she ran back to the camp and told the people. They rushed out to the tree; but the girl had gone, she could not be seen.

The tree grew and grew; and at last the girl reached another land, and there she stepped off the branches of the tree and walked away from it. Before she had gone far, she met there a middle-aged man, who spoke to her, and she began to cry. He said to her, "Why,

¹ This story was taken down many years ago from the lips of White-Bull (Hotūa Whoko mas), a Northern Cheyenne, who was born in the South in 1837, and died on the Tongue River Agency, Mont., July 10, 1921. White-Bull's first name was Ice, the name also of his grandfather, a famous warrior who took part in the attack on the Crow camp about 1820; and under this name, with another Cheyenne, Dark, he professed in the year 1857 to have devised a medicine which should render harmless the bullets of the white troops under Col. E. V. Sumner in the campaign of that year in Kansas. In the fight the troops did not use their guns, but charged with the sabre, and this unexpected action obviously rendered the medicine useless! The Indians fled, and lost three or four men. White-Bull was long greatly respected as a medicine-man and priest. He took part in the Custer fight in 1876, where his only son was killed. As one of Two-Moon's band in 1877, he surrendered to Gen. N. A. Miles at Fort Keogh, Mont. For many years he was one of the four chiefs of the Northern Cheyenne, the others being Two-Moon, Little-Chief, and American-Horse.

what is the matter with you? Only last night you were wishing to marry me." He was the bright star.

He married the girl, and they lived together. He told her that she could go out and dig roots and *pommes blanches* with the other women, but that there was a certain kind of *pomme blanche* with a great green top that she must not dig; to dig this was against the medicine. Every day the girl used to go out to dig roots; and one day, after she had been out some time, she began to wonder why it was against the medicine to dig one of these strange *pommes blanches*, and made up her mind that she would dig one and find out about it. Next day she dug one up. It took her a long time; and when she pulled up the root, she saw that it made a hole through the ground on which she was standing. She could look down through this hole, and see, far below, the great camp from which she had come.

When she looked down and saw the lodges, and the people walking about, very small, she was homesick; she felt that she wanted to get back to her people, and she wondered how she could get down. Near by there grew great long grass; and after she had thought for a time about getting away, she wondered if she could not make a rope of this grass. She began to do so; and for many days she worked, braiding a great long rope. Her husband used to wonder why she was out of doors so much, and what she was doing; and one day he asked her. "Oh," she said, "I walk about a great deal, and that makes me tired; and then I sit down and rest." He did not understand it.

At last the woman had finished her rope, and let it down through the hole in the ground till she thought she could see it touch the earth below. She got a strong stick and laid it across the hole, and tied the rope to it, and began to let herself down. For a long time she went down safely; but when she got to the end of the rope, she found it was not long enough, and that she was still far above the earth. For a long time she held on there, crying. At last, however, she had to let go; and she fell, and the fall broke her all to pieces. Although the fall killed her, her unborn child did not die; he was made of stone, and the fall did not kill him.

A meadow-lark, flying about, found him, and took pity on him, and took him to its nest. The lark kept him there like one of its young ones; and when the boy got big enough, he used to creep out of the nest with the young birds. The stronger the birds grew, the stronger he became. He got so, after a time, that he could crawl about very fast. After the birds had grown big enough to fly a little way, the boy was able to run about. When the birds became strong, and could fly about anywhere, he could follow them. He was growing to be a big boy.

When the time came for the birds to go south, the meadow-lark said to the boy, "Son, you would better go home now; before long it

is going to be very hard weather here; we are all going to the south country." The boy said, "Father, why do you want me to go home? I want to go with you." — "No," said his father, "it will be too hard; you would better go home. Your people live down the stream; go home to them." — "Well, father," said the boy, "I will go home if you will make me a bow and arrows." The meadow-lark did so, and pulled out some of his own quills to feather the arrows. He made him four arrows and a bow; and after they were finished, the meadow-lark pointed out to him which way to go, and the boy started in that direction.

He travelled along for some time; and when he reached the camp, he went into the nearest lodge, where an old woman lived. The boy said to her, "Grandmother, I want a drink of water." She said, "Grandson, water is very hard to get. Only those who can run the fastest can have water." — "Why is it hard to get water, grandmother?" he asked. "Why, grandson," said she, "only the young men go for water, the fastest runners. There is a fearful animal there, a *mih'nⁱ* that draws in (to itself) people who go near it." The boy said, "Grandmother, give me your buffalo-paunch bucket and your buffalo-horn ladle. I will go for water." — "Grandson," she said, "many young men have been killed by going there for water. I fear you will be killed, too." Nevertheless she gave him the things he asked for, and he went to the stream and began to dip up water. While he was doing this, he kept looking about for this animal.

When his bucket was full, the *mih'nⁱ* raised its head above the water. It had a great mouth; and as it drew in its breath, the suction from the mouth drew in the boy, and the water and the bucket and the spoon. Now, when he was sucked in, the boy had his knife; and when he found himself inside the *mih'nⁱ*, he saw there all the people that had ever been swallowed by it. With his knife he cut a hole in the animal's side, and let out all the people. Then he brought the water to his grandmother.

"Why," said his grandmother, "my son, who are you? What are you?" — "Grandmother," said he, "I am Falling-Star; I have killed the great thing that has been starving you for water." The woman told an old man of this, and he cried it through the camp that Falling-Star had killed the great animal that had so long deprived them of water.

After he had saved that camp, he said to his grandmother, "Grandmother, are there any other camps of people near here?" The old woman said, "Yes, there is one down below, on this stream." Then Falling-Star left the camp, taking with him his bow and arrows.

¹ A mythical water-monster described as a very large lizard, partly covered with hair, and with one or two horns. The thunder-birds have been known to kill these monsters. One or two writers have inferred that *mih'nⁱ* is an alligator, but this is not the fact.

It is now the fall of the year. The boy travelled and travelled, and at length he reached the camp below. When he got there, he went into an old woman's lodge. She was sitting there alone, with her head hanging down, and only one stick of wood [on the fire]. He said to her, "Grandmother, I am very cold; why don't you have a larger fire?" — "Why, grandson," she said, "we cannot get any wood; there is a great Owl¹ in the timber, that kills people when they go for wood." — "Give me your rope and axe," said Falling-Star; "I will go and get wood." — "Ah, no, grandson! do not go! He is a great and terrible owl. He takes people up and sticks them into his ears," said the old woman.

Falling-Star took the rope and axe, and started out for wood. As he was chopping wood in the timber, he kept looking all about him for the owl. After his wood was cut and tied up, suddenly this great owl appeared, and took the boy up and put him into his ear. After the boy had been put in the ear, he took his bow and one of his arrows and shot the thing in the brain, and it fell down dead.

The boy crept out of the ear, and took up his wood and carried it back to his grandmother's lodge. "Now," he said, "grandmother, we will have a big fire and get warm. I have killed this great thing that kept you from getting wood." The grandmother told of this; and an old man called it through the camp, that Falling-Star had killed the great owl that lived in the timber.

Some time after this, Falling-Star asked his grandmother if there were any other camps near by, and she told him that on beyond there were others. So he left that camp. By this time it was winter, and snow lay on the ground. Falling-Star came to the camp, and went into an old woman's lodge and sat down. The old woman did not set food before him; and at length he said to her, "Grandmother, I am very hungry."

"O my son!" said she, "we have no food. We cannot get any buffalo. Whenever we go for buffalo, a great white crow comes about and drives them away." Falling-Star said, "That is bad, that is very bad, I will see what I can do. Do you go out and look about the camp for an old worn-out robe, with but little hair on it; and tell the old chief to choose two of the swiftest runners in the camp, and send them to me."

The old woman went out to look for such a robe, and found one; and then she went to the chief's lodge, and told him that she wanted him to choose two of the swiftest men on foot in the camp; and that when he had found them, he should bring them to Falling-Star at her lodge. She took the robe back to the lodge.

The two swift young men were sent to Falling-Star; and he told

¹ *Mî'stâi* = owl or ghost.

them that when any buffalo came near the camp, he would go out to a certain place; and that when the buffalo ran, he would follow them; and that these young men must chase the buffalo, following him far, and not giving up; and that when they overtook him, they must shoot at and kill him; and that after they had killed him, they must cut him open and leave him lying there.

Not long after this, buffalo were seen, and came close to the camp; and the men started out to try and kill some. When they started, the white crow flew over the buffalo, and called out, "They are coming! They are after you! Run, run!" The buffalo started and ran; and behind them ran an old scabby bull, with little hair on its body, which could not catch up with the herd. The two swift young men chased this bull, and did not give up; and at last they caught him and shot him, and killed him, and then opened him and left him there, and returned to the camp, as Falling-Star had told them. After they had cut him open and left him, as they were going back to the camp, the young men looked back, and saw birds of all kinds, and wolves and coyotes, gathering about the carcass. Among the birds was the white crow. He would fly over the carcass and alight, and say, "I wonder if this is not Falling-Star!" Then he would fly over the bull again, and alight, and say, "I wonder if this is not Falling-Star!" He kept getting closer and closer to the carcass, and called out to the other birds, "Leave the eyes for me! Do not touch the eyes! I wonder if this is Falling-Star!" He kept getting still closer; and just as he was about to peck at the eyes, Falling-Star reached out and caught him by the legs. As soon as he did so, all the birds flew away, and the coyotes and wolves scattered all over the hills. Falling-Star brought the crow to his grandmother's lodge, and sent for one of the soldier bands and the chief, to decide what should be done with the crow. The chief said, "I will take him to my lodge and tie him in the smoke-hole, and smoke him to death." He took him to his lodge, and tied him over the fire in the smoke-hole; but one day the crow twisted loose and got away.

Falling-Star sent some of his young men out to gather flax-weeds; and from the bark he made a long string, and to the end of the string he tied a slender thread, and to the thread he tied a small feather. He blew this feather out of the top of the lodge, and told the people to watch the string; and whenever it stopped going out, to pull it back quickly; and at the end of it they would find the crow. When the string stopped, they drew it in, and soon the crow came fluttering down through the smoke-hole. Then they killed it. After this they caught many, many buffalo. The people said, "Now we are saved. Now we can have plenty to eat."

Falling-Star left that camp, and travelled on to another. He went into an old woman's lodge, and said, "Grandmother, I am hungry, I

want something to eat." — "Son," she said, "it is bad here, we have nothing to eat. When we go to chase buffalo, Winter-Man sends a big snow-storm, and we can get nothing." Falling-Star said to his grandmother, "The next time that buffalo come, you and I will go out and get some meat. So fix up your dog-travois." When the buffalo came, he said to her, "Get ready now! We will go." They all went out and killed some buffalo. There was one nice fat cow; and Falling-Star said, "Come, grandmother, we will cut up this one."

As they were butchering, Winter-Man appeared on the hill, with a great club in his hand. He started down toward them, and the grandmother wanted to run. Falling-Star said, "Do not run away, grandmother!" and as he said this, he cut out the kidney from the cow, and handed it to his grandmother. By this time Winter-Man was close to them. He said to Falling-Star, "Why do you give the kidney to that old woman?" Winter-Man lifted his foot and kicked the old woman, and his leg flew off. He raised his hand and struck at her, and his arm flew off. He opened his mouth to speak to her, and his head flew off, and he fell down. They butchered the cow quickly, and went away and left Winter-Man lying there.

After they got to the lodge with the meat, they had something to eat; and Falling-Star said, "I think I will go over and see Winter-Man." — "No," said his grandmother, "do not go! You have treated him badly, and he may kill you." — "I think I will go," said Falling-Star. "Where does he live?" His grandmother said, "He lives over there in that cut bank."

Falling-Star went to the cut bank, and went in; and Winter-Man, who had been brought in and cured by his wife, said, "Why do you come here after the way you have treated me?" — "Why, uncle," said Falling-Star, "I only wanted to talk to you, and to see your bow." He took up the bow, which was made of a great tree, and bent and broke it.

Winter-Man said, "Why do you do this? Get out of my lodge! Why do you stay here when I order you out? Have you no feeling? Have you no shame?" — "Oh," said Falling-Star, "I want to see your club." He picked up the club and struck Winter-Man over the head with it, and killed him with his own club. Then he killed his wife and children, all except one little one who got away and crept into a crevice in the ground. After he had done this, he went back to the lodge and told his grandmother that he had killed Winter-Man and all his family except one. He said to her, "Tell every one in the camp to heat water and pour it into that crevice, and try to scald that child to death." The people did this for a long time; but whenever they stopped, they could see frost rising out of the crack, and at last they stopped. If he had killed that one, we should have had no more snow.

Falling-Star left that camp and travelled on. It was now the middle of winter. The days were short, and it became dark early. One night he came to a stream, and saw a light on it. When he had come close to this light, he saw near him a man, who wore a necklace made of many ears of people strung together, standing looking at the camp. Falling-Star said to himself, "That is Double-Eyes." He crept back, and went to where some box-elders grew; and from the fungus¹ which grew on them he cut out many pieces shaped like ears, and strung them about his neck. He walked back, and went up to Double-Eyes, who said to him, "Halloo, friend! Where do you come from? Why, you look just like me!"

"Yes," said Falling-Star, "I am the same kind of a medicine-man. Suppose, now, the people wanted to kill you, how could they do it?" — "Why," said Double-Eyes, "if the people knew it, and caught me and threw some grease into the fire, and rattled on a medicine-rattle, I should fall down dead. I go around biting peoples' ears off, and making necklaces of them. There is one lodge here that I have not been into. After it is quiet, and these people all get to sleep, I am going into that lodge." Falling-Star said, "We are just alike; that is the only way I can be killed." Of the lodge he was talking about, Falling-Star said, "I will go in and see if all are asleep, and will come back and tell you." — "It is well," said Double-Eyes.

Falling-Star went to the lodge; and when he got there, he said, "Are all here asleep?" Some one answered, "No." Falling-Star said, "That person who goes about biting off ears is coming here. You must all pretend to be asleep, and snore, and then you can kill him. The only way he can be killed is to build a big fire and throw some grease into the fire, and shake a medicine-rattle. If you do that, he will fall down and die."

The people in the lodge were glad when they heard this, and they said they would do as Falling-Star had told them. Then Falling-Star went back to Double-Eyes, and said to him, "All are asleep and snoring. Let us go! I will go in first." — "No," said Double-Eyes, "I will go in first." — "Very well," said Falling-Star.

They went to the lodge; and when they got close to it, they listened, and all were snoring. Falling-Star said again to Double-Eyes, "I will go in first." — "No," said Double-Eyes, "I will go in first." He entered; and when he was inside, Falling-Star closed the door and put his weight against it, and called out, "He has gone in!" The people arose quickly and built up a big fire. Double-Eyes was trying to get out everywhere, but Falling-Star was like a rock against the door.

¹ This fungus is called in Cheyenne *is-tō-wō-ěsh-kōn*, meaning "one's ears," with a diminutive, — perhaps "one's small ears." It looks like the old-fashioned dried apples, which have been given the same name.

The people threw some grease into the fire, and shook a medicine-rattle, and Double-Eyes fell down dead. Next morning the people threw Double-Eyes out of doors. All those in the camp came about him, and recognized their own ears and took them. Falling-Star made a big sweat-house, and told the people to get into it and take a sweat, and to hold their ears against the sides of their heads. They did so; and when they came out, all had their ears on as natural as ever.

While he was in this camp, he was told that they needed him at the next camp; that a lodge had been built for him, and a girl was waiting to marry him. Those people were worse off than any. An old woman lived there who scalped people. Falling-Star reached the place, and found it just as he had been told. His lodge was up, and the girl he was to marry was waiting for him. All the people had been scalped, and had their heads tied up.

The old woman heard of his coming, and went over to see him. She said, "Why, grandson! I heard that you had arrived, and have come over to see you. I need two scalps to use on the robe I am fixing." — "Yes, grandmother," said Falling-Star, "we heard you needed scalps, and that is why we came." The girl had not been scalped; she had long hair, and so had Falling-Star. After a while he went over to the old woman's lodge, taking his wife with him. She did not want to go into the lodge, she was afraid; but he coaxed her to go, yet it was a long time before she would go in.

When they entered, the old woman said, "I am glad to see you. You have nice hair." — "Yes," said Falling-Star, "we came here for that reason, because we heard you needed good scalps." He told his wife to sit on the side away from the old woman, saying, "I will let her take my hair first." The old woman made ready her knife, and walked over to Falling-Star to cut off his hair. As she came close to him, he struck her; and because he was made of stone, he knocked her down and killed her at the first blow.

When the people heard that Falling-Star had killed this old woman, they all rushed into the lodge; and after they had seen that she was really dead, when they looked about the lodge, each man knew his own scalp hanging there. Now Falling-Star made a big sweat-house; and he told all the people to get in and take a sweat, and while they were sweating to hold their scalps on their heads. They did this; and when they came out of the sweat-house, their heads were perfect.

Falling-Star married the girl, and lived always with these people.